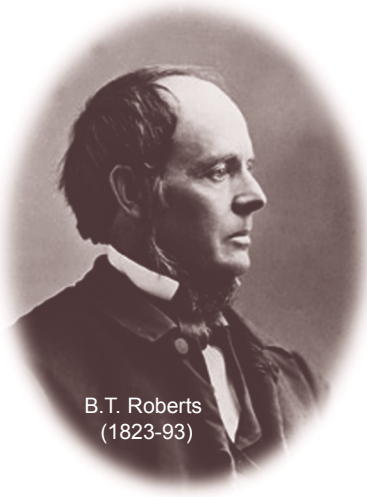


FREE METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Newsletter

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## **A RETURN TO THE BEGINNING**

*Christy Mesaros-Winckles*

B. T. Roberts began publishing *The Earnest Christian* in 1860 and the magazine continued to be published monthly until 1909. In celebration of the 2015 General Conference Marston Memorial Historical Center is publishing a “retro issue” with sample articles from the magazine. The monthly magazine regularly featured editorials by Roberts, Christian advice by numerous writers (including some prominent Free Methodist women writers of the time period), testimonies, and news. It was an independent publication that Roberts put out himself and sustained through subscriptions. You can read more articles, including original issues, of *The Earnest Christian* on Marston’s website — [fmcusa.org/historical](http://fmcusa.org/historical)

## **SIMPLICITY**

*B.T. Roberts*

The word simplicity in its better sense implies sincerity, singleness of character, probity, frankness, freedom from all guile, and from all artifice and dissimulation. Thus the apostle says, “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in worldly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world.” (2 Corinthians 1:12.) There should be simplicity in our purposes and motives. He who aims at the same time, at two objects in opposite directions, will hit

neither. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. If God is our master we shall not seek to please the world. If the world is our master we shall make no honest efforts to please God. There is no harmony between them.

Whoever adheres to the one will oppose the other. The effort to secure the glories of heaven, and at the same time enjoy the riches and honors of this world, can but result in a disastrous failure. “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” (James 4:4). Never was a saint a millionaire. Never was a millionaire a saint. Men who get rich aim at getting rich. They live for that. To this one purpose their thoughts and their energies are directed. They make their tastes, their friendships, their pleasures, all yield to this one engrossing object of pursuit.

Men who get to heaven aim at getting to heaven. To this great object they deliberately consecrate their lives. The highest earthly interests must yield to this. To this, when necessary, the dearest friendships are sacrificed. Everything is made to contribute to the securing of this, the great end of existence. Nothing is allowed to divert their attention from the work to which they have consecrated their lives. Everyone who gets through to heaven is a man of one pursuit. This simplicity of purpose begets simplicity of life. This is manifested not in one way merely, but in every way. There is no double dealing in business. There is no praying for the salvation of souls, and then, for the sake of making money, helping them down to hell

in the ordinary avocations of life. No business is engaged in, no matter how profitable, that is naturally demoralizing in its tendency. God never compels his servants to work for the devil.

The inward disposition manifests itself in the outward conduct. He who has no guile, seeks no disguises. If the desire to please God predominates in the heart, the dress will not proclaim that its wearer is making a strenuous effort to gain the admiration of men. It will be plain and unostentatious. The manners will be simple and unaffected. There will be no putting on of airs — no affected tones, no aping of gentility. There will be a naturalness that will make others feel at home in their society. Nothing will be assumed, to produce the impression that one is rich, or cultivated, or refined, or of high social position. This simplicity is essential to our stability. “Double-mindedness is opposed to simplicity. But, a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” (James 1:8.) Sometimes he is devout, and again he is worldly. He cannot depend upon himself, and others cannot depend upon him. His position is uncertain. Such will never be cured, until they deliberately and firmly, and forever settle it that they will be men of one business. They must give up the effort to serve God and mammon

Without this, little progress can be made in the divine life. If there is any growth in grace it will be slow indeed. If we would grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must sit constantly at his feet. If you would attain perfection in Christ, you must give to this your study and your time. There must be a simplicity of intention manifest to all, and which enters into all the transaction of life. You must seek first — that is, chiefly — the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

— August 1874

## CAMP MEETINGS

*B.T. Roberts*

We need to take a week in the busy season of the year, and set it apart to the solemn worship of God, that we may not become engrossed with the cares of the world, or be led away, like others, with deceitfulness of riches. To be thus reminded

that we are pilgrims and strangers, that we are journeying to the land of promise, tends to produce the most salutary effect. The success of a camp meeting depends very much upon the way in which it is conducted.

There is nothing so good in itself that it can be spoiled by bad management. Dwelling in tents will not make men religious. A sermon preached under the inspiration of vanity will not be likely to accomplish any more good from the stand than from the pulpit. The aim should be an immediate revival of the work of God. The Bible standard of piety should be raised. Men should be appointed to preach who have spiritual discernment, and who can so present the truth to the people as to get them under conviction.

Great, dry, historical, metaphysical and transcendental sermons should be reserved for some other occasion when nothing is expected to be accomplished. Let the plain-searching truth of God’s word be poured red-hot upon the conscience. Get the people to confessing their sins and breaking down before the Lord. The first and constant effort should be to secure an outpouring of the Spirit.

This can never be realized until there is a sincere getting down in the presence of God. If the laborers at a camp meeting feel that they are “Rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing,” but very little of permanent value will be likely to be effected. Phariseism in the woods is as unproductive of good as phariseism at home; The Bible standard of religion should be so clearly presented and so candidly maintained from the word of God, as to carry conviction to every honest mind.

Many have backslidden so gently as to be unaware of the fact. Others, who once had the power of godliness are clinging to the form and the profession with the tenacity, of death, though the vitality of spiritual life is fled. The light should be thrown upon such minds. They stand, perhaps, in their respective localities as the representatives of the religion of Jesus, and unless they can be brought, in their experience and their lives, to the Bible standard, the converts added to the church through their instrumentality will be feeble and helpless.

If you have any — preachers or people, men or women — whose lips have so recently been touched with a live coal from off God’s altar that they have not become cold, set them to work, at the camp meeting, especially at its commencement. Give them a fair chance to labor for souls. Stand by them as long as they are sustained by the Bible. What if Satan does rage. Do you suppose that hell can be stormed and devils be kept good natured? Let the Spirit of God have free course upon the camp-ground, even if formalists should go so far as to pull up their tents and go home.

If the Holy Spirit is among you in power you will not want for people. They will come flocking in as they did at the day of Pentecost — as they did at the first camp meeting held in this country.

— July 1864



Cowden Camp, 1913

## REVIVALS

### *Dedication at Albion, NY*

Every provision made for preaching the gospel to the masses is a matter for congratulation. The tendency of the exclusive system upon which most of the churches in the cities and large towns in Western New York are conducted, is to alienate the masses from religious worship. In a church where a few have their



pews which they occupy as a right, the many will not feel like intruding; nor will they consent to advertise their poverty from Sabbath to Sabbath by occupying seats reserved for the poor. Hence, we are glad to chronicle the success which has crowned the effort to build a Free Church in Albion. The Rev. L. Stiles, who, with others, was expelled by the Genesee Conference, at its last session from the Methodist Episcopal Church, for doing his duty as a Christian minister, was invited by the great majority of the church at Albion.

Rather than have any disturbance, they gave up the Methodist Episcopal Church property, to which they were legally entitled, and proceeded at once to purchase a lot and erect a house of worship. This house was, yesterday, dedicated to the worship of God by the Rev. E. Bowen of the Oneida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His sermon, on holiness, based upon 1 Cor. 6:20, "For ye are bought with a price." It was most able and impressive, and it made a profound impression upon the vast congregation in attendance.

It was judged that some 1,300 persons were in attendance. Many went away unable to find standing room. In the evening, the Rev. B. J. Ives delivered one of his powerful appeals from the words, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." The thrilling shouts of the people showed that the truth had fell upon ears capable of appreciating it. The house, thus dedicated, is a substantial structure — 101 feet by 55. The audience room — the largest in the place — pleasant and commodious, will seat about 1,000 persons. The house is plainly and neatly furnished.

The cost for the building has been about \$10,000. The whole has been paid or provided for. About \$4,500 were raised yesterday and last evening. For this result great credit is due to the Rev. B. J. Ives, through, whose indefatigable exertions the whole amount called for was secured. The meeting continued over the

Sabbath. Rev. Ives preached with more than his usual power to a congregation as large as could be packed into the spacious church, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered to some 440 communicants.

— July 1860



**DEAR BROTHER ROBERTS:** Our first camp meeting in Southern Indiana was held near Midway, Spencer Co., commencing Tuesday, July 20th, and closed Tuesday night, July 27th. From beginning to end it was very spiritual. At nearly every meeting souls were saved. It was the first real victory we have had in this part of the work since Brother Jones left us, and our hearts are rejoicing in the Lord, in as much as he has again visited us with his saving power. The preachers were wonderfully helped in proclaiming the truth. The word was indeed in power. Praise the Lord. A report soon began to spread among awe-stricken, that we had sent far and near and gathered together all our great preachers for the occasion; when the facts were we had only called together a few of the boys from our own conference. The preachers present were: W. W. Kelley, (who had charge of the meeting); Brethren Haley, Abbott, Hardin, and Hyle. The meeting was a decided success financially as well as spiritually. Enough money was made to pay the expenses, and also for the lumber used. It was cheerfully contributed by the large audience present. Indeed the people were blessed in giving. Lifting the collection was a spiritual meeting. Quite a large number of persons were sanctified wholly, and a good many converted. "We are thanking God and taking courage."

— J.W. Vickery, August 1880



## TESTIMONY

**L. W. MILLARD** — I prize the EARNEST CHRISTIAN very much. It will be but a few years at most that I shall read it, but I hope to carry with me some of the blessed effects of its teaching as I pass over the river. It has cheered my poor heart many times when outside all was dark and dreary, God bless you and help you to keep the banner waving.

— August 1890

**DORA OSBORN** — I feel the work of the Lord more than ever. I have worked all summer (excepting three weeks) steady, and now I look back and the time has been so short, and I have done so little for God, compared with what he has done for me. I feel more and more like waiting at his feet and crying, "Lord, equip me for the work." Every fiber of my being is -consecrated to the Lord for his service. Whenever and wherever he wants to use me, I am ready. Praise the Lord! A year ago I could not say this, but since I have learned the way of faith, and the Lord has called me into the vineyard. The Lord wonderfully keeps me by his power, bless his name.

— January 1887



## EVANGEL

The Free Methodist Church has been blessed by the ministry of the *Evangel* for 118 years. This publication started out in 1897 as a take-home paper for young people. It was called *Youth's Temperance Evangel*. In 1912 it was combined with several other youth papers and retitled *Light and Life Evangel*. In March 1972 – sixty years later- the title became simply, *Evangel*. Sadly, the August issue of 2015 is the last issue readers will enjoy. But, all issues are preserved in the Free Methodist Archive.

Editors of this take-home paper have included: W. B. Olmstead, 1897-1907; D. S. Warner, 1907-1919; G. W. Griffith, 1919-1923; Burton J. Vincent, 1923-1931; B. L. Olmstead, 1931-1941; B. H. Pearson, 1941-1943; LeRoy M. Lowell, 1943-1956; Helen E. Hull, 1956-1972; Vera Bethel, 1972-1993; Carolyn Smith, 1993-1995; and Julie D. Innes, 1996-2015. You'll notice several of the early editors went on to serve the church as bishop.

Through the years, the name of the paper and editors have changed, but, the mission to share the Good News of Christ has remained the same. "The *Evangel*, a weekly adult publication, seeks to increase the reader's understanding of the nature and character of God and the nature of a life lived under the lordship of Christ. Devotional in character, it directly and unashamedly lifts up Christ as the Source of Salvation and hope."

The FMC-USA website advertised this publication as "The perfect take-home paper for adults. EVANGEL is filled

with articles and short stories that encourage spiritual growth through current topics such as: joy, life issues, substance abuse, grief, unemployment, parenting, and others. Read personal accounts of God's provision — hope, help and encouragement. EVANGEL is a weekly Sunday school paper that is printed quarterly for distribution to subscribers (individuals or churches) by Light and Life Communications the

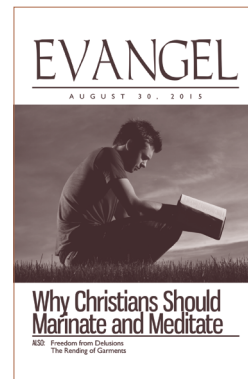
publishing arm of the Free Methodist Church. It is geared toward adults."

Individuals over the years have taken time to share with the editors how they have used *Evangel* as part of their devotional/journaling; as a witnessing tool to those in prison; and to share with shut-ins. When visiting the Marston Historical Center and Free Methodist Archive, please ask to see copies and read *Evangel* for the first time or as an old friend. It will live on in history and be made available to future generations.

— Cathy Robling, Director, MMHC



An early issue (above) and last issue (below) of *Evangel*.



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